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Even Our Spy Boss Gets the Itch to Talk

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WASHINGTON — Given a brain, a mouth and an ego to match, most people find it difficult to keep a secret.

This, in the opinion of a man whose life is devoted to keeping and breaking secrets, is especially true of Americans. The Russians and English are better at keeping their mouths shut. Americans, by nature, are extroverted, ebullient, ambitious.

"These are fine qualities for the insurance business but not intelligence work," Allen Welsh Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, told a friend recently.

"For most of us, the urge to show we know more than the next fellow can be a terrible temptation. Keeping secrets is difficult and you have to be trained for it. Even I have an itch now and then to tell more than I should."

The itch, in Dulles' case, never gets irresistible. It was totally nonexistent one night in September, 1959, at an elaborate White House dinner for a foreign visitor. Coming through the receiving line, Dulles was introduced by President Eisenhower to a fat man named Nikita Khrushchev.

"Oh, I know of you," Khrushchev grinned. "I read your reports."

Later, over after-dinner cigars, Dulles was led back to Khrushchev by Vice President Nixon.

"You know Mr. Dulles, don't you?" Nixon said.

"Oh, yes, I read your reports," said the Russian dictator.

"I hope you get them legally," said the American intelligence chief.

"Oh, yes," said Khrushchev in a renewed burst of coexistence comedy, "We get these reports from the same sources and the same agents. It's a pity that we don't get together and pay these agents only once and save money."

"Well, this would be a kind of sharing the wealth program," Dulles said, and the conversation ended.

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Has to Check Himself

ENDING THAT dialogue was easy. But there are other times, with people far more innocuous than Khrushchev, when Dulles must consciously apply the brakes. This is especially true after a long day at the office followed by an evening with friends in innocent conversation about the state of the world.

In such situations, Dulles finds himself frequently pausing before speaking and asking himself:

"Now, let's see about this thing I'm about to say. Where did it come from? Did I read it in an AP dispatch or a secret cable?"

As head of the most secret agency of government, Allen Dulles bears the awesome job of keeping the President and National Security Council regularly informed on developments behind the Iron Curtain, in Laos, Cuba, the Congo and other trouble spots.

Much of the American position adopted in foreign affairs and military matters is based on the almost daily reports and appraisals President Kennedy finds on his desk from CIA. The agency is both a prime source and a clearing house. It correlates information from its own sources and from intelligence branches of the State and Defense Departments to form a total intelligence picture for the guidance of the President.

A large percentage of that picture is based on

—Associated Press Wirephoto

Genial Allen Dulles Lives and Works in a Hush-Hush World

analysis of overt material — foreign technical journals, official and semiofficial statements, press stories, books, maps, radio broadcasts, routine reports of American officials abroad. More than 200,000 pieces of "open literature" flow into the CIA document center a month.

A small part of the total picture comes from clandestine sources, from agents, from defectors, from the perennial mercenary of espionage who is in the business only to sell information. The num-

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ber of secret documents reaching CIA each week runs into the thousands."

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It's Highly Dangerous

WHILE modern intelligence is not the melodramatic bloodbath pictured in fiction — "We're not running a slaughter house," Dulles has said — it is still a highly dangerous business.

Agents do disappear. Agents do get killed without even their families knowing what they were doing to get killed.

But Dulles, who bears the ultimate responsibility, appears to wear his burdens lightly or under a self-disciplined air of heartiness. He is a man with many concerns, among them the safety of a given agent whose life may be in peril at the moment. He worries. He does what can be done. But then, in going home at night, he tries to declare a cut-off point to his fears.

"I can't spend my time worrying about things I can't do anything about," he told a friend. "If something goes wrong, that's too bad. If it goes right, I just hope we can keep it a secret as long as possible."

If that last sentence sounds cryptic, it must remain that way. In conversation, Dulles does not allow himself to be drawn too deeply into any one theme.

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Has No Gun or Guard

ONE MAY SAFELY assume that Dulles carries in his head a fat bag of secrets ranging from the identity and location of secret agents to a total classified picture of our national security. Yet he does not carry a gun, ordinarily has no guard unless carrying classified documents and travels widely abroad though the trips "are never advertised."

After a long career in intelligence — he worked abroad in the two world wars and has headed CIA since 1953—Dulles has never been shot at or been the target of a kidnap plot, to his knowledge.

He is alternately amused by the crudities of Russian propaganda and respectful of the high professional caliber of Russian espionage and security.

For example, he easily dismisses the Communist charge that the projected Peace Corps is an elaborate plot for the CIA to infiltrate agents abroad.

"Nothing is more foolish," he has said, "than the notion that we are interested in just anybody traveling abroad. We use professionals, and they have to have a specific target."

He has a high respect for the Russian professionals, for the Soviet talent for ferreting out other people's secrets and keeping their own.

"Russian security is a far harder nut to crack than the Germans' was. Their controls are much tighter. People don't come in and out of Russia even the way they did in Nazi Germany during the war.

"The Russian system, of course, is better geared to security. Theirs is a closed society. In our country, for example, it is difficult not to advertise our missile locations while the Russians have vast areas they can close off.

"We still reveal too much, unlike the Russians. Go through our technical journals and you'll find ten times as much of value to an intelligence man as we find in the Russian magazines."

Still Has Enthusiasm

DESPITE his long years in the business, Dulles still has a fresh enthusiasm for his job. Part of it appeals to what he admits is his appetite for conspiracy—a taste every good intelligence man needs. Apart from tennis and bridge, Dulles spends much of his off-duty time reading mysteries and spy fiction which, he says, is not entirely unrealistic except for its emhasis on gore.

"There are real dangers, of course. But there is a mortality rate and, though our men are screened very carefully, we do have a percentage of breakdowns due to cumulative strain.

"The tension in this business is higher than in most others.

"This is a dangerous profession. But in some ways the interest and excitement can help keep you young. You're not likely to die of sedentary diseases. Boredom, I think, kills more people than guns do, outside of wars."

"One of the interesting aspects is judging individuals, picking people, especially when a man comes in with a story. It's one thing to see him in person. But sometimes I have to judge a man just on the basis of a cable without seeing him.

"Paid intelligence always is questionable. You get the most from people who are motivated for other reasons than money. Sometimes their motives are not always good.

"Some defectors have come over to us because of a woman or other personal difficulties. But most defectors are highly motivated. They're willing to work against the dictator of their country at the risk of their lives."

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Most Applicants Rejected

IN DULLES' experience, the qualifications of a secret agent (as opposed to a defector) must include high motivation, a conviction that his work is valuable, a taste for conspiracy and analytical work, and a capacity for anonymity, selflessness and abnegation.

Applicants for CIA work are screened minutely. About 80 per cent are ruled out after routine preliminary tests. Of the remaining 20 per cent, 11 are eliminated because they drink too much, talk too much, have contacts with the wrong people or relatives behind the Iron Curtain which would make them subject to foreign pressure.

A good agent never passes up a chance to collect material that might be useful if only in the remote future. A good agent never makes the same mistake twice. It was back in 1916, during the first world war, that Dulles learned never to ignore a potential source, however odd.

Dulles was then on a diplomatic and intelligence mission in Switzerland. He had a day off when a friend approached and suggested they ought to drop in on a "strange man" nearby with a "strange new theory." Dulles declined and went out to play tennis.

And that is why Allen Welsh Dulles, director of the Central Intelligency Agency of the United States and a preeminent authority on worldwide tactics and strategy of Russian communism, never got to meet Nikolai Lenin.